

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

105th Congress
2nd Session

Vote No. 191

July 9, 1998, 5:25 p.m.
Page S-7824 Temp. Record

HIGHER EDUCATION/Welfare, Education In Lieu of Work

SUBJECT: Higher Education Act Amendments of 1998 . . . S. 1882. Wellstone amendment No. 3111.

ACTION: AMENDMENT AGREED TO, 56-42

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 1882, the Higher Education Act of 1998, will reauthorize and amend numerous Federal higher education programs.

The Wellstone amendment would amend the work requirements of the Welfare Reform Bill enacted last Congress (see 104th Congress, second session, vote No. 262). Under current law, a cash welfare recipient is required to work within 2 years of first receiving benefits. Twelve categories of work are defined, including that an individual may take vocational education classes for 1 year instead of working. Thus, an individual may receive welfare for 2 years, and then sign up for vocational education classes for 1 year and continue receiving welfare benefits without working. The Wellstone amendment would change current law by allowing an individual to substitute vocational education for work for 2 years instead of for 1 year, and by allowing an individual to substitute up to 2 years of college education for work. A third change that would be made by the Wellstone amendment would be to exempt teen welfare mothers from the calculation of the percentage of a State's caseload that is meeting its work requirement with education. Under current law, minimum percentages of States' welfare caseloads must be employed, and no more than 30 percent of welfare recipients who are counted as being employed may be counted due to educational activities.

Those favoring the amendment contended:

We enthusiastically support the Wellstone amendment. The current welfare work rules are cruel. Most welfare recipients are single women with one or more children, and most of them have very little education. We agree that they should stay on welfare for as short a time as possible, and that it is best for them, for their children, and for the country if they get jobs, but they need good, decent jobs. Under the current rules, they are being shoved into a workforce in which they cannot compete. They are being forced

(See other side)

YEAS (56)			NAYS (42)		NOT VOTING (2)	
Republicans (11 or 21%)	Democrats (45 or 100%)		Republicans (42 or 79%)	Democrats (0 or 0%)	Republicans (2)	Democrats (0)
Allard	Akaka	Johnson	Abraham	Hagel	Hutchison- ² Kyl- ²	
Chafee	Baucus	Kennedy	Ashcroft	Helms		
Collins	Biden	Kerrey	Bennett	Hutchinson		
D'Amato	Bingaman	Kerry	Bond	Inhofe		
Hatch	Boxer	Kohl	Brownback	Kempthorne		
Jeffords	Breaux	Landrieu	Burns	Lott		
Snowe	Bryan	Lautenberg	Campbell	Lugar		
Specter	Bumpers	Leahy	Coats	Mack		
Stevens	Byrd	Levin	Cochran	McCain		
Thomas	Cleland	Lieberman	Coverdell	McConnell		
Warner	Conrad	Mikulski	Craig	Murkowski		
	Daschle	Moseley-Braun	DeWine	Nickles		
	Dodd	Moynihan	Domenici	Roberts		
	Dorgan	Murray	Enzi	Roth		
	Durbin	Reed	Faircloth	Santorum		
	Feingold	Reid	Frist	Sessions		
	Feinstein	Robb	Gorton	Shelby		
	Ford	Rockefeller	Gramm	Smith, Bob		
	Glenn	Sarbanes	Grams	Smith, Gordon		
	Graham	Torricelli	Grassley	Thompson		
	Harkin	Wellstone	Gregg	Thurmond		
	Hollings	Wyden				
	Inouye					

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

to take jobs on which they cannot support themselves and their families. A very simple solution is available. If they are allowed to get minimal skills, through vocational education or through community colleges, they will quickly be able to become productive members of society. For instance, according to the American Association of Community Colleges, the starting salary for people with 2-year degrees in various computer disciplines is more than \$25,000. Two-year degrees in accounting, law enforcement, dental hygiene, respiratory therapy, radiology, and nursing similarly can quickly lead to permanent self-sufficiency for former welfare recipients. The current welfare law, though, does not allow any postsecondary training, and the vocational training that it allows, 1 year, is not long enough to gain competency in many vocational education areas. Another very unfair aspect of the current law is that it requires all teen mothers to be counted under a States' 30-percent education work-activity cap. As a practical matter, it would be best to have all teen mothers in school instead of working. The Wellstone amendment would correct all of these problems by letting welfare recipients count 2 years of vocational education and 2 years of postsecondary education as work, and by exempting teen mothers from the 30-percent cap. We urge our colleagues to support this amendment.

Those opposing the amendment contended:

The Wellstone amendment addresses a nonexistent problem and threatens to undo the progress that is being made in ending welfare in America by getting welfare recipients employed. The welfare reform bill enacted in 1994 has already reduced the welfare rolls in the United States by 34 percent. We are down from a record 5.1 million families on assistance to just 3.4 million families today. Previous Federal attempts to reform welfare failed. Those previous attempts all emphasized training and education. The bill passed two years ago was different. It set very clear goals for getting welfare recipients into the workforce, and it gave States broad authority to come up with programs that worked best for them. The General Accounting Office has studied how the States are implementing the bill, and it has found that they are increasingly moving toward "work-first" strategies rather than education strategies, because they are finding that the work-first strategies work. The States already are given broad authority to meet work requirements with vocational training, job skills training, education directly related to employment, education to earn a high school diploma or general equivalency diploma (GED), on-the-job training, and similar activities that fall short of unsubsidized private employment. They are using many of the choices given them, but they are generally finding that it works best to get them into unsubsidized, private employment quickly. The General Accounting Office is not the only one that is finding evidence to this effect. For instance, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Education recently released a study called the "National Evaluation of Welfare Work Strategies" that shows that work-first strategies work better than education-training-work strategies. That national study of 55,000 welfare recipients transitioning to work found that people who were in work-first programs were as likely or were more likely to pursue education independently as people who were in education-first programs. In other words, they were working, and they went to school on their own initiative without any help from the government. Further, they had higher earnings than people who went through education-first programs. Based on all the evidence, we should be encouraging States to move away from more education training before moving people off of welfare. The Wellstone amendment, though, advocates exactly the opposite. Giving the States this option would let them stop making progress in cutting their welfare rolls. It would result in a huge expansion in the number of people who met work requirements by going to school instead of by gettin